

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle in which a male shaft and a female shaft are fitted to each other non-rotatably and slidably, wherein

at least one set of torque transmission spherical members are disposed in at least one first set of intermediate fitting portions formed on the outer circumferential surface of said male shaft and the inner circumferential surface of said female shaft, and

a stopper plate for regulating movement of said at least one set of torque transmission members with respect to the axial direction is provided at an end portion of said male shaft or in the vicinity thereof, being characterized in that:

at least one torque transmission roller with a cylindrical surface portion is disposed in at least one second set of intermediate fitting portions formed on the outer circumferential surface of said male shaft and the inner circumferential surface of said female shaft; and

said roller is preloaded in the axial direction by
said stopper plate.

2. (currently amended) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second sets of intermediate fitting portions comprises at least one first and second sets of axial grooves formed on the outer circumferential surface of said male shaft and the inner circumferential surface of said female shaft, respectively, and the axial grooves on ~~of~~ said male shaft have a ~~surfaces~~ that are ~~is~~ substantially perpendicular to the axial direction, one such perpendicular surface being and in contact with said roller ~~at least one set of torque transmission members.~~

3. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein said stopper plate comprises an elastic member for applying axial preload and a pair of flat plates that hold the elastic member therebetween.

4. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein

said stopper plate is fixed to a small diameter portion formed at an end portion of said male shaft.

5. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein said stopper plate comprises a flat plate and fixing means for fixing the flat plate at a desired position with respect to the axial direction on said male shaft.

6. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 2, wherein said stopper plate comprises an elastic member for applying axial preload and a pair of flat plates that hold the elastic member therebetween.

7. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 2, wherein said stopper plate is fixed to a small diameter portion formed at an end portion of said male shaft.

8. (previously presented) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 2, wherein said stopper plate comprises a flat plate and fixing

means for fixing the flat plate at a desired position with respect to the axial direction on said male shaft.

9. (new) A telescopic shaft used for steering of a vehicle according to claim 2, wherein there are plural sets of torque transmission spherical members and plural torque transmission rollers disposed alternately with said sets of torque transmission spherical members in respective first and second sets of axial grooves, and wherein said rollers are needle rollers.